

# Twenty Tennessee Books

BY STANLEY F. HORN

What is the most important book of Tennessee history? What are the basic books relating to the history of the state? \* What ten—or twelve or twenty—books should be considered as foundation essentials in the building of a Tennessee historical library?

Such questions have been asked many, many times, and they are intriguing and provocative. It may as well be said at once, however, that actually there is no absolute answer to any of these questions. That is, there is no answer that would be accepted by all informed persons as correct beyond dispute—for these, after all, are largely matters of personal opinion. Furthermore, so far as I know, no one has had the temerity to attempt an answer. No one has been so bold as to say: “This is the best book—” or “These are the most important books—” on Tennessee history.

Some of those whose memory runs back a few decades will recall Dr. Eliot’s then celebrated “Five Foot Shelf of Books,” consisting of that eminent educator’s selection of a group of books, the reading of which in his opinion would provide the reader with the basis of a sound literary education. Dr. Eliot was careful to point out that he was not contending that these were necessarily the best books or the only books that would accomplish such an end. This was, he said, merely one man’s opinion as to a group of books that would provide pleasant and profitable reading to anyone who might wish to improve his general knowledge. In the same spirit I have compiled a list of books which I have found interesting and valuable in my study of early Tennessee history. There are twenty of them, and they will fit comfortably on a three-foot shelf.

I hesitate to use the word “basic” in speaking of these books. I do feel, however, that anyone who reads and digests them will have a well-grounded general knowledge of the basic history of our state; and if he is fortunate enough to possess all of them, he will have established the foundation for a Tennessee historical library of distinction and sound value.

With this explanation, I submit my selection of “Twenty Tennes-

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\*[Editor’s Note: This paper was read before the Tennessee Historical Society at its monthly meeting on December 10, 1957.]

see Books." They are numbered and arranged in more or less chronological order. Their arrangement should not be assumed to indicate any feeling as to their relative merit.

## 1

*THE MEMOIRS OF LIEUT. HENRY TIMBERLAKE.* London:  
Printed for the author, 1765. 8vo; viii + 160 pages.

This highly entertaining and instructive book may well be considered the Number One volume in any Tennessee library, since it is the first book ever written concerning activities in the area now embraced in this state.

Henry Timberlake was a native of Virginia, and was one of the troop of Virginia Light Horse commanded by William Byrd. In 1761 he was a member of the expedition against the Cherokees, and was present at the signing of the peace treaty concluded in November of that year. Following the signing of the treaty he spent three months traveling among the Cherokees and living with them in their towns. Upon his return to Virginia he was given custody of the Cherokee chief, Outacity, and took him to England for a visit; then in 1764 he accompanied another group of Cherokees to London.

It was, presumably, during these visits to London that Timberlake made arrangements for the publication of his *Memoirs* there in 1765. This narrative of his travels and his contacts with the Indians, his record of their manners and their customs, their mode of living, etc., is of the greatest interest and historical importance. Accompanying the book is a map of the Cherokee country (as of 1762), showing the principal Indian towns, including the one called Tennessee on the (Little) Tennessee River above Fort Loudon.

This original edition of Timberlake's *Memoirs* having become so rare as to be almost unobtainable, Judge Samuel C. Williams in 1927 published a reprint edition (Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tenn.). In this edition Timberlake's original text is reprinted in full, amplified by the addition of an index and a bibliography, together with an Introduction and enlightening notes by Judge Williams. In 1948 the Continental Book Co., Marietta, Ga., published a new edition of the Williams 1927 edition. This latest edition is still in print.

2

*THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN INDIANS.* By James Adair. London: Printed for E. and C. Dilly, 1775. 4to; 464 pages.

James Adair was a native of Scotland, who came to South Carolina in 1735 and engaged in the Indian trade, largely with the Cherokees and with the Chickasaws in northern Mississippi. The exact date of his sojourn among the Cherokees in the Tennessee country is hard to determine, but it was probably in the neighborhood of the time of the adventurer Christian Priber's activities there, 1733-1743, for Adair tells in some detail of Priber's ambitious but unsuccessful efforts to establish his Utopian empire.

Adair was a man of education and discernment, with keen powers of observation and the gift of fluent expression. His book was the first of any considerable length on the subject of the North American Indians. Based on first-hand observation, it is a source book of the greatest importance, properly regarded as a reliable and authoritative work. The frontispiece is "A Map of the American Indian Nations adjoining to the Mississippi, West and East Florida, Georgia, South and North Carolina, Virginia, &c."

In 1930 the National Society of the Colonial Dames in Tennessee, recognizing the great value of this book as source material and the desirability of making it available to a larger number of readers and students than could possibly have access to the original edition, which had become exceedingly scarce, requested Judge Samuel C. Williams to undertake the editorial work of bringing out an annotated and indexed reprint. This he did (The Watauga Press, Johnson City, Tenn., 1930), and the result is an octavo volume of 508 pages which adds the erudition and literary skill of Judge Williams to the original observations of Adair, one of the first literate visitors to the territory which is now Tennessee. This edition was reprinted in 1953 by the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America in Tennessee, with a Nashville imprint.

3

*THE CHRISTIAN ADVOCATE.* By a Tennessean. Nashville: Printed and sold by Thomas G. Bradford, 1819. 8vo; vi + 357 pages.

The "Tennessean" to whom the authorship of this book is attributed on its title page was Judge John Haywood. He was Tennes-

see's first historian, and this was his first historical book; hence this work is of unique importance in the recording of the state's history.

The avowed object of *The Christian Advocate*, as set forth in the preface and as indicated by its title, was to appeal to the young men of Tennessee and "engage their pride on the side of Religion." The first half of the book is devoted to a somewhat involved and tedious discussion of the Old Testament and various abstruse theological questions. In developing the topic that "All Men Are From One Common Ancestor," however, Judge Haywood attempts to show that the aboriginal inhabitants of America emigrated from Asia, and this theory he supports with a variety of facts and statements gleaned from early inhabitants of Tennessee regarding the Indians and their traditions as to those who lived here before them. Here, incidentally, is to be found the first account in print in Tennessee of the old Stone Fort in Coffee County, with the statement that on the 7th of August, 1819, a white oak tree growing on top of the wall of the fort was cut down and was found to have 357 annular rings, showing that the tree was 30 years old when Columbus discovered America.

Much of the material in *The Christian Advocate* was later used by Haywood in the writing of his *Natural and Aboriginal History of Tennessee*, and by some booksellers *The Christian Advocate* is described as "the first issue of the *Aboriginal History*."

This is an excessively rare book, and seldom offered for sale.

#### 4

*THE NATURAL AND ABORIGINAL HISTORY OF TENNESSEE UP TO THE FIRST SETTLEMENTS THEREIN BY THE WHITE PEOPLE, IN THE YEAR 1768.* By John Haywood. Nashville: Printed by George Wilson, 1823. 8vo; viii + 390 + liv pages.

This is the first published history of Tennessee and is generally regarded as the scarcest, most desirable and most valuable of all Tennessee books.

The first two chapters (66 pages) are sufficient for Haywood's consideration of the state's natural history. It is the aboriginal history which principally interests him and which he treats at great length, with detailed and ingeniously supported speculation as to the prob-

able origin of the American Indian tribes, especially those which lived in Tennessee.

Judge Haywood's writing, it should be remembered, was done without benefit of the extensive libraries and collections of documentary material which are available to the modern historian. What he wrote was based largely on his own observations and on what he was able to learn from personal interviews with old inhabitants. Haywood was the leading spirit in the organization in 1820 of the Antiquarian Society, the forerunner of the Tennessee Historical Society, and much of the material in his books is presumed to have been obtained through contacts he made in this way. Although not without errors, the *Natural and Aboriginal History* is justly regarded as the foundation work in Tennessee history, and has been freely drawn upon by subsequent historians. Unfortunately it is a very rare book, has never been reprinted, and is in relatively few libraries.

5

*THE CIVIL AND POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, FROM ITS EARLIEST SETTLEMENT UP TO THE YEAR 1796; INCLUDING THE BOUNDARIES OF THE STATE.* By John Haywood. Knoxville: Printed for the author by Heiskell & Brown, 1823. 8vo; 504 pages.

In his Preface, addressed "To the Public," Judge Haywood expresses regret that "No one has yet attempted to record the memorable achievements of the eminent men of Tennessee," and also voices the author's modest hope that "of the materials which he has now collected and recorded, some future historian may avail himself, and be enabled to represent the historical occurrences of the periods embraced in this volume in a style of eloquence suited to the high merit of the actors."

That Haywood's "modest hope" has been abundantly realized is made evident in the writings of those who have followed him and have leaned so heavily on the material to be found in what Haywood wrote. He was writing only a few years after the actual occurrence of the events discussed and still had the advantages to be derived from personal contacts with actual participants, a fact which gives this book its well deserved reputation as a storehouse of information about Tennessee's earliest days and the men who laid the state's foundation stones.

The popularity of the *Civil and Political History* is shown by the

fact that it has been twice reprinted. In 1891 Judge Haywood's great-grandson, William H. Haywood, brought out a second edition (Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church South, Nashville), which was dedicated to the Tennessee Historical Society and includes a ten-page sketch of Haywood's life by Col. A. S. Colyar. This reprint was duplicated without change in a 1915 edition.

## 6

*THE TENNESSEE GAZETEER OR TOPOGRAPHICAL DICTIONARY.* By Eastin Morris. Nashville: Published by W. Hasell Hunt & Co., 1834. Small 8vo; cxvi + 178 pages, plus Appendix.

The first section of this *Gazeteer* is made up of a brief historical sketch of the state from the earliest settlements down to the adoption of the Constitution in 1796, followed by a condensed year-to-year account of the more important proceedings of the General Assembly from 1796 up to and including the Constitutional Convention of 1834, also including the text of the new Constitution adopted at that Convention. The second section consists of a description of the state's several counties, towns, villages, post offices, rivers, creeks, mountains, valleys, etc., alphabetically arranged. The Appendix contains a list of the practicing attorneys in each county, the names of the principal officers of the federal and state governments; times of holding courts; stagecoach and steamboat routes, with tables of distances, etc.

The *Gazeteer* is a valuable, almost an essential, adjunct to the study or intelligent reading of early Tennessee history. Where else can we find, for instance, that in 1834 Cairo, situated on the north bank of Cumberland River about three-quarters of a mile below the mouth of Bledsoe's Creek, had thirty families, two physicians, an academy and church, one tavern, one cabinet maker, one machine maker, one cotton and wool factory, one rope walk, two tailors, two blacksmiths, one gunsmith and two shoemakers? Or that Columbia, the seat of justice of Maury County, with 1500 inhabitants, had: a college, an academy, four common schools, one printing office, three churches, three divines, thirteen lawyers, five doctors, twenty stores, three taverns, four groceries, fourteen blacksmiths, three bricklayers, eight carpenters, four cabinet makers, three gunsmiths, two hatters, two painters, four saddlers, four shoemakers, three silversmiths, four tailors, two tanners, two tinnerns, two wagon-makers, one cotton gin, two carding machines, and a branch of the Union Bank of the

State of Tennessee? The only remaining vestige of Cairo today is a squalid huddle of three or four tumble-down houses, with no trace of its former lively existence; Columbia has developed into one of the most attractive and important of the state's smaller cities. But in the *Gazeteer*, and nowhere else, we have a graphic picture of what these (and other) towns were like in 1834, and in this way can recapture a sense of the way of life of the people who inhabited Tennessee in those early days.

Mr. Morris did not publish any subsequent edition of his *Gazeteer*, and it is not known how many copies were printed of this 1834 edition. It must have been a relatively small number, however, for few of the books seem to have survived until this time.

7

*THE ANNALS OF TENNESSEE TO THE END OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.* By J. G. M. Ramsey, A.M., M.D. Charleston: J. Russell, 1853. 8vo; xiv + 744 pages.

This was the first effort at the writing of the history of Tennessee after the publication of Judge Haywood's works of 30 years before.

Dr. Ramsey proudly described himself as "one of the first born of the sons of the State of Tennessee," having been born in 1796, the year the state was admitted to the Union; and he had the distinction of being the first native-born historian of the state.

In addition to drawing on his own knowledge and experiences as he grew up with the infant commonwealth, Dr. Ramsey in writing his *Annals* had access to the journal and papers of his father, who was active in the affairs of the State of Franklin, as well as the papers of John Sevier, Isaac Shelby, William and Willie Blount and other public men of the time. Much of Ramsey's material relating to the very earliest days of the state is derived from Haywood and is to some extent repetitious, but the *Annals* is rich in original and previously unpublished matter relating to the experiences of the pioneers. It contains a vivid account of the early settlers' participation in the battle of King's Mountain, also the first recorded history of the State of Franklin. John Sevier, to quote Ramsey's own words, is "the hero of the book."

As a frontispiece there is inserted a folded "Map of Cumberland and Franklin" engraved especially for this book, showing the location of the settlements, roads, etc., in the Tennessee country as of that era.

In his preface Dr. Ramsey stated that he had in his possession sufficient material to write a second volume of the *Annals*, "should the public voice seem to demand" it. During the next few years he proceeded with the writing of this second volume, bringing the history of the state from 1800 up to the end of the Mexican War. Unfortunately, however, this manuscript, along with all his library, was destroyed when his home near Knoxville was burned by Federal troops in 1863.

In 1860 another edition of the *Annals* was published by J. B. Lippincott of Philadelphia. Sixty years later, in 1920, J. Tyree Fain, then secretary and treasurer of the Tennessee Historical Society, compiled a small book with a big title: "Fain's Critical and Analytical Index and Genealogical Guide to Ramsey's Annals of Tennessee, Embracing all Proper Names as well as Important Topical Subjects," which book was "printed for subscribers" by Paul Hunter, bookseller, of Nashville. As a preface to this little book Mr. Fain printed a paper he had read before the Tennessee Historical Society at its September 6, 1919, meeting, in which he explains his motives in compiling the Index and tells of the painstaking and tedious labor involved in its preparation.

"The *Annals*," says Mr. Fain, "contain more historical data relating to Tennessee than any other book"; but the absence of an index, he goes on to say, makes "this vast store-house of history . . . almost wholly inaccessible as a work of reference." Mr. Fain's *Index* was a most valuable contribution to Tennessee historical writing, and has been of priceless assistance to researchers and writers since it was written. Its value as an almost essential adjunct to a basic book of Tennessee history was recognized in 1926 when the Judge David Campbell Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution sponsored the publication of a reprint (Kingsport Press, Kingsport, Tenn.) of Ramsey's *Annals*, with the addition of Fain's *Index*. For practical purposes, this is the most useful edition of this valuable book—and, fortunately, the most readily procurable.

## 8

*HISTORY OF MIDDLE TENNESSEE; OR, LIFE AND TIMES OF GEN. JAMES ROBERTSON.* By A. W. Putnam. Nashville: Printed for the author, 1859. 8vo; xvi + 668 pages.

Mr. Putnam states that in the publication of this book he "had access to some original, valuable and hitherto unpublished docu-



ments," and there is ample evidence of this in the book. Of particular interest are the copious quotations from the proceedings of the Committee of Notables which served as the governing body of the early settlements on the Cumberland.

Ramsey's *Annals* was largely devoted to affairs in the eastern part of the state; Putnam's book is concerned principally with the history of Nashville and the surrounding Middle Tennessee, with special emphasis on the part played by James Robertson in these developments. Here was first printed the text of the "Articles of Agreement, or Compact of Government, entered into by settlers on the Cumberland River, 1st May 1780," also the Journal of the voyage of John Donelson and his party "in the good boat Adventure," leaving Fort Patrick Henry on Holston River on December 22, 1779, and arriving at "the French Salt Springs on Cumberland River" on April 24th, 1780. Much that we know of the early history of Nashville, the courage and the suffering of the early settlers, is derived from the pages of Putnam's priceless chronicle of those troubled times.

An informative illustrative feature is supplied by a map of Nashville showing the location of its streets and buildings in 1804, also another map showing the city as of 1854.

9

*LIFE AS IT IS; OR MATTERS AND THINGS IN GENERAL.* By J. W. M. Breazeale. Knoxville: J. Williams, 1842. 12 mo; 256 pages.

The nature of this interesting, valuable and scarce little book may best be indicated by quoting its complete title as spread on the title-page: "Life As It Is; or Matters and Things in General: Containing, amongst other things, historical sketches of the exploration and first settlement of the State of Tennessee; manners and customs of the inhabitants; their wars with the Indians; Battle of King's Mountain; History of the Harps (two noted murderers); a satirical burlesque upon the practice of electioneering; legislative, judicial and ecclesiastical incidents; descriptions of natural curiosities; a collection of anecdotes, etc."

Breazeale's book gives a succinct and graphic sketch of the history of Tennessee up to the time of writing, also a particularly entertaining and enlightening account of all phases of the day-by-day life of the early pioneers of the state. The book is chiefly known and

valued, however, for its detailed story of the almost incredibly atrocious depredations of the noted outlaws, Micajah and Wiley Harp, who terrorized the dwellers in the early settlements and the travelers on the Natchez Trace and other lonesome roads.

Breazeale has a rather florid literary style, but his book deserves a place in every Tennessee historical library.

## 10

*EARLY TIMES IN MIDDLE TENNESSEE.* By John Carr. Nashville: Published for Elisha Carr (nephew of the author) by E. Stevenson and F. A. Owen, 1857. 12 mo; vi + 248 pages.

This little book is made up of sketches which had been written by Mr. Carr for the *Christian Advocate* (a periodical of the Methodist church published at Nashville) and the *Southwestern Monthly*, also published in Nashville. In an introduction by John B. McFerrin, who encouraged the writing of these reminiscences, John Carr is described as "a man of undoubted integrity and possessing a memory unsurpassed for its tenacity."

Carr, who was one of the earliest pioneers in Middle Tennessee, was a participant in many of the events of which he writes in an unpretentious but impressive literary style. His book is one of the few Tennessee history source books based on the first-hand knowledge and experience of the writer. He writes about what he himself did and what he saw with his own eyes. He helped build some of the pioneer forts in Sumner County, and he was a member of the party that pursued the Indians who had burned Sigler's (Zigler's) Station in 1792. He was personally acquainted with James Robertson. His personal sketches of Robertson and such other famous persons as Kasper Mansker, Thomas Spencer, James Winchester and others are based on his own association with them, and are correspondingly interesting and worthy of respect.

## 11

*THE LIFE OF JOSEPH BISHOP.* By John W. Gray, M.D. Nashville: the author, 1858. 12mo; 236 pages.

Although phrased in the style of an autobiography, written in the first person, the actual author's name is given on the title page. In the introduction Mr. Bishop says: "I am going to dictate the history of my life to a friend, and as I cannot stay here much longer

than the time he will require to write it in, I shall make truth my aim from preface to conclusion, allowing my narrator to fill each story out in his own language."

Joseph Bishop was one of the earliest settlers in the Cumberland country, and the book is a narration of "his wonderful adventures and narrow escapes with the Indians, his animating and remarkable hunting excursions, interspersed with racy anecdotes of those early times." Despite Dr. Gray's pedantic and flowery style of writing, the experiences of Joe Bishop as set down by him constitute one of the most engaging and valuable of the first-hand books of Tennessee historical reminiscences.

12

*OLD TIMES IN TENNESSEE, WITH HISTORICAL, PERSONAL AND POLITICAL SCRAPS AND SKETCHES.* By Jo. C. Guild. Nashville: Tavel, Eastman & Howell, 1878. 8vo; 503 pages.

The title of this book aptly describes its delightfully interesting contents. Judge Guild lived a long time and knew a great number of people who played a prominent part in the affairs of the state. He writes most entertainingly of the "old times in Tennessee" which he recollected personally, together with reminiscences of some of the early settlers who related their experiences to him. The book is highly esteemed by all those interested in the early history of the state, and serves as a fruitful work of reference for present-day writers. It has grown scarce in recent years.

Being based largely on recollection rather than research, Judge Guild's reminiscences are sometimes hazy as to dates and exact details and should be used with care as source material. For what it purports to be, however, a picture of life in the early days of the state's history admirably capturing the full flavor of the era it covers, *Old Times in Tennessee* will always rank high as a favored book for a Tennessean's library.

13

*KING'S MOUNTAIN AND ITS HEROES.* By Lyman C. Draper, LL.D. Cincinnati: P. G. Thomson, 1881. 8vo; xv + 612 pages.

This is generally recognized as being the most complete and authoritative source of information about the battle of King's Mountain, in which John Sevier and other Tennesseans played such a prominent part.

Dr. Draper during the greater part of his lifetime was secretary of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and was a tireless collector of documentary material pertaining to the early history of the nation. As a result of his recognition of the great importance of such material, at a time when so many others regarded historical documents as of little or no interest or value, the Wisconsin Historical Society is today the possessor of one of the country's greatest collections of source materials relating to the pioneer history of Tennessee and other states.

Dr. Draper so thoroughly covered the subject of King's Mountain in this excellent book, written 76 years ago, that few writers have had the hardihood to attempt another book on the subject since that time. It is truly the definitive history of this important historical event, the source to which all writers turn when they wish to write anything about this decisive battle of the Revolution.

The book, becoming scarce, was reprinted in facsimile by the Dauber & Pine Bookshop, New York, in 1929.

## 14

*THE ANTIQUITIES OF TENNESSEE.* By Gates P. Thruston. Cincinnati: R. Clarke & Co., 1890. 8vo; xv + 369 pages.

General Thruston was an officer in the Federal army, who married a Nashville girl and became one of Nashville's most prominent citizens after the war. After taking up his residence here he became interested in all aspects of Tennessee history, but specialized in the study of the aboriginal residents of this section, who left their mounds and burying grounds as evidence of their having been here in pre-historic times. He conducted some of the earliest archeological activities of Middle Tennessee, opening these mounds and graves and preserving the artifacts discovered there. He served as corresponding secretary of the Tennessee Historical Society for a number of years, and when he died he left the Society a bequest of \$10,000.

*The Antiquities of Tennessee* was the first scholarly book in this field, and is today valued highly as the primary source book for those who wish to study this phase of Tennessee's history.

15

***DROPPED STITCHES IN TENNESSEE HISTORY.*** By John Allison. Nashville: Marshall & Bruce Company, 1897. 8vo; 152 pages.

Judge Allison, in his preface, describes this book as "an effort to put together in readable form some facts in the very early history of Tennessee not hitherto fully shown, if even mentioned."

The book consists of a series of ten sketches describing people and events in the early days of the state, principally in the environs of Jonesboro where Judge Allison was born and where he lived until 1889. Having an intense interest in the history of the locality, he lost no opportunity to talk with the old people of the Jonesboro region, preserving their recollections of pioneer times. He also had access to the earliest court records made at Jonesboro from 1778 to 1800, and what he writes is a combination of personal reminiscences and recorded history, set down by a lawyer with a gift of narration and scrupulous regard for accuracy. Much of this material concerns the activities of Andrew Jackson while a resident of Jonesboro, and is the source of many of the Jackson anecdotes re-told by other writers.

By no means the least interesting feature of *Dropped Stitches* is the Appendix, in which is reprinted Dr. R. L. C. White's "A Centennial Dream," with its interpretation, which constitutes a uniquely valuable short course in early Tennessee history.

16

***HISTORY OF THE LOST STATE OF FRANKLIN.*** By Samuel Cole Williams. Johnson City, Tenn.: The Watauga Press, 1924. 8vo; xiii + 371 pages.

This was the first of what proved to be a series of important and valuable contributions by Judge Williams to the written history of Tennessee and its antecedent political entities. The effort of the settlers along the head-waters of the Tennessee River to establish a separate state soon after the close of the Revolutionary War has long provided one of the most dramatic chapters in the history of our country, but historical writing on the subject had been fragmentary and sketchy. To the task of writing this, the first authoritative history of that important episode, Judge Williams brought a vast store of information based on exhaustive study of source ma-

terials, together with a gift for lucid and entertaining narrative. As Judge Williams points out, a movement for separation was rife on all frontiers in the 1780s, following the Revolution, but no other movement for separate statehood reached anything approximating the stage attained by Franklin—a *de facto* government, waging war, negotiating treaties and functioning for several years in legislative, executive and judicial activities. The story of Franklin's rise and fall is here told in great detail and excellent literary style. It is the last word on Franklin, the ghost-state which was the forerunner of the state of Tennessee.

This book was printed in a limited edition, which was soon exhausted as its merits became known. In 1933 it was reprinted by the Press of the Pioneers, New York.

## 17

*THE BEGINNINGS OF WEST TENNESSEE, IN THE LAND OF THE CHICKASAWS, 1541-1841.* By Samuel Cole Williams. Johnson City, Tenn.: The Watauga Press, 1930. 8vo; xii + 331 pages.

Strange as it may seem, this is the first history of West Tennessee to be given to the public. Judge Williams was himself a native of West Tennessee, although he lived the greater part of his life in the eastern part of the state, and the writing of this book was to a great extent a labor of love, undertaken because nobody else seemed inclined to fill this void in the written history of the state.

Basing his writing on the information gathered in his extensive research in connection with the writing of his other books, Judge Williams here tells the history of that part of the state between the Tennessee and Mississippi Rivers for the three hundred years from 1541 to 1841. The continuation of the region's story from 1841 to the present time is a task remaining to be attempted by some latter-day writer.

## 18

*DAWN OF TENNESSEE VALLEY AND TENNESSEE HISTORY.* By Samuel Cole Williams. Johnson City, Tenn.: The Watauga Press, 1937. 8vo; xi + 495 pages.

Judge Williams himself has described this as "my best book," and there will be few to disagree with this opinion. Certainly it is the closest approach to a definitive history of Tennessee for the period

covered—1541-1776; and, in connection with the same writer's *History of the Lost State of Franklin* and his subsequent *Tennessee During the Revolutionary War*, constitutes the best existing history of the state until the end of the Revolution and the beginning of the Southwest Territory.

In writing this book Judge Williams made use of archival and other source material not available to previous writers, and he produced a work which will serve as a foundation stone to future students of these earliest days in the history of the region which was to become the state of Tennessee. It is thoroughly documented and annotated, and provides an outstanding example of the author's scholarship, accuracy and literary skill.

19

*TENNESSEE DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.* By Samuel Cole Williams. Nashville: The Tennessee Historical Commission, 1944. 8vo; xi + 294 pages.

This is the volume designed by Judge Williams to fill the gap between his *Dawn of Tennessee Valley and Tennessee History* and his *History of the Lost State of Franklin*. It treats of civil as well as military affairs in the Tennessee country during the Revolutionary War. Based on material gathered from the principal archives and libraries of England and America, this book gives an impressive picture of the life of the people of this region during the days of the Revolution. It brings out clearly the fact—perhaps surprising to some casual readers of history—that these transmontane people volunteered and took part in a number of Revolutionary War battles. They fought not only at King's Mountain, but twice in Georgia, three times in South Carolina, once in North Carolina, once in the Indiana territory and twice in the Kentucky country. Tennessee, of course, was not a state during the Revolution, being then a part of the revolting province of North Carolina, but this volume by Judge Williams shows that the people who lived in the territory that was later embraced in this state took an active and valuable part in that war.

*EARLY TRAVELS IN THE TENNESSEE COUNTRY, 1540-1800.*

By Samuel Cole Williams. Johnson City, Tenn.: The Watauga Press, 1928. 8vo; xi + 540 pages.

This is a sort of anthology of extracts from the writings of more than thirty early visitors to the territory which is now the state of Tennessee, beginning with the somewhat dubious visit of DeSoto and his men and continuing with the fully authenticated accounts of later travelers in these parts. For sheer readability and interest to layman as well as historian, this is outstanding among the contributions Judge Williams has made to the history of his state. It is copiously annotated, and also supplied with illuminating illustrations.

In closing, I wish to repeat and emphasize that these observations are presented merely as one man's opinion. It is not suggested that this should be accepted as a definitive bibliography of the best or the most important books relating to early Tennessee history. Others, in days to come, may well compile better selections of better or more important books. Meanwhile, however, I hope that this list of "Twenty Tennessee Books" may prove to some extent helpful to those interested in reading what has been written about the history of our state.